

Project brief:

Peer researcher

Evaluation: Theory of Change

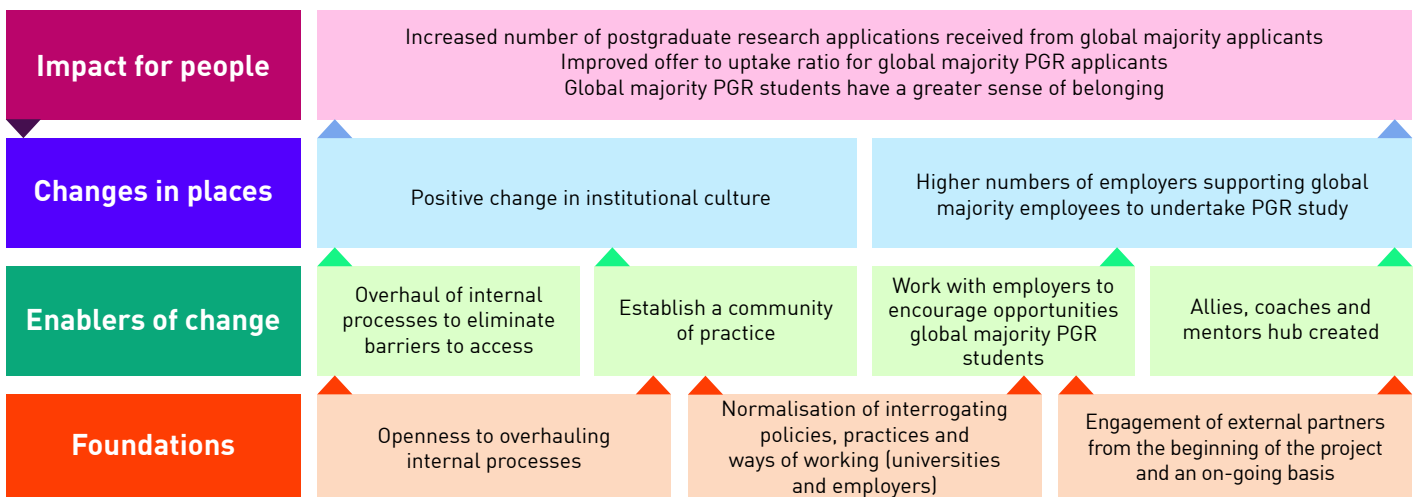
Theory of Change

A Theory of Change explains how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It maps out the steps or interventions needed to achieve long-term goals, showing the links between activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts. Often used in project management, a Theory of Change can help clarify a project's purpose and goals, guide, track, evaluate and communicate project activity, inform resource planning, engage project stakeholders, foster transparency, and ensure accountability.

Find out more information here: [Theory of Change | NCVO](#)

The That's Me! Theory of Change

The current That's Me! Project Theory of Change is presented below.



The problem: Barriers to successfully accessing postgraduate research study exist for global majority communities in the West Midlands. These barriers might include university cultures and processes, the regional employment environment, and access to peer support.

The Theory of Change comprises five levels.

Here's a short explanation of each level in the Theory of Change framework:

- **Problem:** The core issue or challenge the project seeks to address, including its root causes and the context in which it occurs.
- **Foundations:** The underlying conditions, values, or systems that must be in place to support long-term change (e.g. trust, capacity, infrastructure).
- **Enablers of change:** The actions, interventions, or mechanisms that drive progress, such as policies, external and internal partnerships, resources, or innovations.
- **Changes in places:** The tangible shifts that occur in specific communities, institutions, or environments because of the project's activities.
- **Impact for people:** The meaningful improvements in people's lives, such as increased well-being, empowerment, equity, or opportunity.

Peer researcher evaluation project

Aims

To develop a revised Theory of Change that reflects the project's progress across all levels of the framework — including the problem definition, foundational conditions, enablers of change, changes in place-based contexts, and the resulting impact on people.

Methods

The peer researchers will:

- Collaborate with the BCU Project Leads, Post-Doc Research Assistant (and UoW evaluation team as appropriate).
- Carry out reading about the Theory of Change concept and produce a short literature review.
- Finalise a series of questions for stakeholders (See Appendix A for draft questions).
- Arrange meetings with key stakeholders (the project leadership team will help with this) to discuss questions and make appropriate records. Stakeholders include:
 - » BCU Action Research teams (leads and research associates)
 - » Employer Board members
 - » Global Majority Steering Committee
 - » BCU Project Leadership Team
 - » That's Me! research assistants (secondments)
 - » That's Me! post-doctoral research assistants
- Produce a report that draws together meeting discussions to propose a refreshed Theory of Change for the That's Me! Project.

*As applicable, prepare documentation in line with the That's Me! Project ethical approval (i.e., participant information forms and consent forms).

Key milestones

Support meetings with the project leads will be scheduled in between milestones to support as appropriate.

Date	Milestone
By 31 July 2025	- Engage with post-doc mentor - Reading - Finalise questions - Arrange meetings with stakeholders
By 31 August 2025	- Carry out stakeholder meetings - Engage with post-doc mentor
By 30 September 2025	Submit completed draft report to project leads.

Appendix A

Problem

- What are the most significant systemic barriers facing people from global majority backgrounds in accessing and succeeding in postgraduate research?
- How do these barriers manifest at different stages of the postgraduate research journey (routes in, through and out)?
- How do institutional policies or practices contribute to or perpetuate inequalities?

Foundations

- What core values (e.g. equity, anti-racism, justice) must underpin meaningful change in the postgraduate research space?
- What foundational changes are needed in university culture or structure to begin dismantling systemic inequalities?
- What existing institutional strengths, communities or external partnerships can support this work?



Enablers of change

- What specific actions or interventions have helped (or could help) improve access and equity for global majority students?
- Who are the key individuals or entities that can drive or support change, and how can they be mobilised?
- What mechanisms (e.g. funding models, inclusive recruitment, mentoring) are most critical to enabling progress?

Changes in places

- Where have you seen changes within and beyond the institution because of the project?
- Where do you think change is most urgently needed/or there is the most potential for change— for example, in specific departments, decision-making structures or stages of the student journey — and why?

Impact for people

- How has the project improved the experience of global majority students in context?
- What positive changes do you think this project could create for global majority postgraduate researchers?